the capacity of processing plants, Government have placed most of the fish and fishery products under the list of freely importable commodities; except certain groups of live fish and other items.

(c) In order to overcome the shortage of raw materials in this sector, Government is extending financial assistance for development of new aquaculture farms. Government has also approved a scheme for extending financial assistance for deep sea/mechanized fishing vessels to facilitate better harvesting of tuna resources. Further, import of raw materials is being allowed for value addition and re-export.

(d) In order to increase the export of marine products from the country, including Orissa, Government is taking a number of steps, which include the schemes for extending financial assistance for upgrading processing facilities, expansion of aquaculture, imparting of training to aquaculture farmers, assistance for production of value-added products and marketing support.

Export of Agricultural Products

5359: SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of the COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether increase in export of agricultural products is not as per the targets fixed by Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government in this regard;

(c) whether there have been increase in imports of agricultural products during the last three years; and

(d) if so, the areas which need to be targeted to reduce India's agricultural imports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) since exports are dependent on a host of factors, including external factors, no targets are fixed for agricultural exports. However, our agricultural exports have steadily increased over the last few years.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The major agricultural items imported into the country are vegetable oils (edible), pulses, nuts & seeds including raw

cashew nuts, etc. While the edible oils and pulses were imported for processing and re-export. Increased domestic production of these commodities could reduce the need to import these commodities.

Adverse effect of cheap timber imports

3360. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of the COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of small scale manufacturing units in the rural areas in Punjab based on timber have been closed down due to cheaper imports of raw materials as well as finished goods resulting in slump in consumption level of farm forestry products;

(b) whether Government have received any requests from Punjab to help the State in the establishment of wood based paper mills/pulp/board industries there and North-Western region of the country to boost farm forestry and help the poverty ridden families of the State; and

(c) the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Government of India has forwarded the request of the State Government to Paper Industry Associations & Trade Bodies to consider it while deciding the location of their new plants.

Decline in Export of Pepper and Cashew

3361. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will Minister of the COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is **a** fact that the export of value added pepper such as crushed and ground pepper to United States fell considerably in the beginning of the year and the export of cashew slipped to 7 per cent in 2005-06; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the details of steps taken to rectify the above?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir. The export of value